

Wednesday, May 5, 2010

## Leggett heads to Chicago to discuss biotech

### Committee backs ambulance fees; Knapp gets job offer

County News |

Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) was in Chicago on Tuesday discussing the county's efforts to attract and retain top biotech companies.

The efforts include a recently adopted biotech tax credit for such companies, which is believed to be the first of its kind in the country.

Leggett was joined by H. Thomas Watkins, president and CEO of Human Genome Sciences; Peter Greenleaf, president of MedImmune; Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development Secretary Christian S. Johansson; members of the county's Biosciences Task Force; local bioscience industry executives; and state and local economic development officials, according to a news release.

Montgomery County is home to nearly 300 biotech companies, including industry leaders like MedImmune, Human Genome Sciences, United Therapeutics Corporation, QIAGEN, Novavax and Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

The Great Seneca Science Corridor Plan, which received final county council approval Tuesday, calls for 17.5 million square feet of life sciences-focused development in the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center.

The county also has 19 federal research and regulatory agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Leggett traveled to Chicago early Tuesday and was to return to Montgomery County that same night. He had no rental car or hotel expenses, said county spokesman Patrick K. Lacefield.

Lacefield said the price of the plane ticket was not available by deadline.

Police, fire recruiting classes could be delayed

County police would train 40 new recruits in July and abolish a recruit class in January, saving about \$927,000, under recommendations the council's Public Safety Committee made Monday to trim the budget.

The fate of police satellite stations on Piney Branch Road in Silver Spring, on Clopper Road in Germantown and on Briggs Chaney Road in Calverton is uncertain. The committee put the stations on a wish list of items they hope to fund.

County fire and rescue services would delay training recruits until next year, saving about \$671,000, and would reduce budgeted overtime by \$1.3 million, although council staff said that history shows the department is likely to exceed its overtime allotment again.

The committee hopes to be able to pay for some protective gear for volunteer firefighters and put about half the amount requested for boots on the wish list.

Commission favors

ambulance fees

The Montgomery County Fire and Emergency Services Commission voted April 28 in support of ambulance fees.

The vote was 4-3, said commission Chairman Ronald L. Ogens of Potomac.

The seven-member commission includes three county residents, two career personnel and two volunteer first responders.

County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) has proposed raising about \$14.7 million in additional revenue in fiscal 2011 through the ambulance fee. Leggett has said the fee would be \$450 and would not be charged to county residents. Insurance companies, he said, would pay the fee.

However, the County Council's Public Safety Committee already has recommended that the county not adopt ambulance fees, and Councilman Philip M. Andrews (D-Dist. 3) of Gaithersburg said he does not believe the commission's vote will have much impact.

"I think council members already have strong views and have a lot of information already," he said.

Andrews, who chairs the Public Safety Committee, has long opposed Leggett's proposed ambulance fee.

Vovak extends

job offer to Knapp

County Councilman Michael J. Knapp has been rumored to have a number of private-sector job offers over the past several months, and has admitted to considering a run for county executive.

One job offer that can be confirmed is one from Daniel "The Whig Man" Vovak, a Republican candidate for Montgomery County executive. According to a statement on his website, Vovak has offered Knapp, a 2nd District Democrat, the job of chief administrative officer if Vovak defeats County Executive Isiah Leggett (D).

Knapp declined to comment on the offer Tuesday.